

THE ASPECTS OF VALUE-BASED EDUCATION OF FUTURE LAWYERS: THE NEED, CHALLENGES AND POSSIBILITIES OF LEGAL ETHICS' STUDIES

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Purpose. The inherent attributes of the contemporary global society are multiple crisis which originate not only from economic problems or a lack of intellectual resources, but also (and primarily) from disregard of public values and accepted ethical standards. Lawyers bring significant contribution to the protection of these values as their main functions are: the assurance of the rule of law, justice, human rights and freedoms, legal security and legal certainty, the right to a fair trial and legal assistance etc. As these functions of lawyers are important not only for their clients but also for the whole society, it is important for future lawyers to develop their skills and understand their tasks in a wider - ethical - context.

The purpose of the paper is to reveal some relevant aspects of value-based education of future lawyers, namely the need, challenges and possibilities of studies of legal ethics.

Design/methodology/approach. In order to achieve the purpose, the impact of values on the identity of legal profession is discussed; the necessity of value-based legal education of future lawyers is emphasized; the need of value-based education expressed in legal documents, regulating the training of lawyers, is analyzed. According to the experience of foreign and Lithuanian universities, challenges and possibilities of the integrated education of professional values and value-based education through specialized courses are introduced. The paper also presents the debate on legal ethics



course, reveals the relationship between legal ethics and general ethics, provides guidelines for the content of academic course of legal ethics and for its teaching.

The methods of the research are logical and systematic analysis of legal documents and literature, linguistic analysis, comparative and descriptive methods, generalization.

Findings. The necessity for value-based education of lawyers comes from the need of society to preserve its coherence and stability. Without the value-based approach to legal practice the law becomes only an instrument to achieve one's goals. This not only compromises the legal profession, but also violates human rights, the principles of rule of law and justice and can cause a serious threat to sustainable coexistence in society.

The necessity of value-based approach to professional activities is also stressed in national and international documents which regulate the training and conduct of lawyers. However, none of the analyzed documents specifies what values should be developed, how skills of professional ethics should be acquired. Therefore, it can be stated that universities have a broad discretion in the implementation of the requirements of these documents.

Lithuanian universities provide the opportunity to acquire and develop skills, necessary for ethical problems solving, during studies of specialized courses. However the course descriptions reveals the lack of tradition of teaching these courses: the absence of a clear position concerning the place of these courses in the curriculum and their content, the need for consistent guidelines of value-based education and of legal theoreticians and practitioners who would be interested in ethical issues as well as the demand for professional and methodical support.

Value-based education, if it is fragmentary and not unified, can debase the important values or determine their misunderstanding. This should be a great concern of higher schools and of the government.

Originality/Value. The value-based education of future lawyers and the teaching of legal ethics are barely investigated and discussed by Lithuanian legal scientists and educators. Therefore, the review and analysis of legal documents and literature, provided guidelines for the content of academic course of legal ethics and for its teaching as well as final findings might be relevant for the composing and/or development of the curriculum of legal ethics and/or similar courses and for the encouragement of further discussions.



Keywords: value, professionalism, value-based education of lawyers, legal ethics.

Research type: viewpoint.